

## Tips for managing kids with ADHD

You have to know your KIDS in order to manage them.

■ **Know the types of behaviour.**

Behaviour refers to the child's actions. There are generally 2 types of behaviour you want to identify:

- a) appropriate or desirable
- b) inappropriate or undesirable. Where the behaviour is inappropriate, you also need to be clear what kind of behaviour it is:
  - a) Does the behaviour result in physical aggression and dangerous to self and others around him/her?
  - b) Is the behaviour an attempt to seek your attention?
  - c) Is the behaviour something that the child has trouble controlling and needs help?

■ **Increase positive reinforcement of appropriate behaviour.**

When the child does something well or appropriate, highlighting it positively, will increase that behaviour that you want to see more. For instance, praising the child for not interrupting a conversation.

■ **Decrease the negative reinforcement of inappropriate behaviour.**

Negative reinforcement means trying to remove the inappropriate behaviour e.g. by telling them to stop doing it or by punishing them. The chances are that the behaviour will occur again. For instance, telling the child, "*Stop interrupting when I'm talking!*". It is very likely that the child will continue to interrupt you on another occasion.

■ **Systematic and structured approach.**

When you start on a behaviour management plan for your child, make sure it is systematic and structured. You also need to be consistent once you have implemented a plan. It will usually get worse in the initial stages before it starts getting better.

- Once you have identified the undesirable behaviours, focus on one or two behaviours to work on. You may have to ignore the rest while you work on those that you have targeted. If it's not a matter of life and death, let it go rather than fight tooth and nail over them! Respect is mutual respect. A child is a human being and deserves respect and dignity as much as an adult.
- Make sure the ground rules, boundaries and expectations you set are clearly communicated to your child. "*If a child lives with fairness, he learns justice.*"
- Be consistent when you decide on the consequences for both appropriate behaviours and inappropriate behaviours. Mum and Dad must iron out differences of opinion on managing the child so that there is consistency in the parenting.
- You may need to use a combination of positive reinforcement plus negative reinforcement but it is always good to give more positive reinforcement. Rewards need not be just material rewards. They can be a hug, a praise, or a privilege like

spending an extra hour at the computer or a special bonding time with Mummy and Daddy without the other siblings.

*Try to catch them being good more often than you catch them being naughty!*

- Do Not make hurtful, angry remarks about your child  
like:
  - “You’re so stupid!”
  - “I wish you were never born”
  - “Go and die!”
- When you have to scold your child, focus on WHAT he/she did, NOT on the person.  
Say:
  - “What you did was wrong!” rather than “You’re a bad boy!”
  - “I love you but I don’t like what you did to your baby sister”, instead of “Get out of my sight... I don’t love you!”

*There are 3 typical scenarios and some possible strategies to use. The strategies are guidelines and will vary depending on the specific rules you have established within your family.*

<b>Behaviour</b>	<b>Possible strategies to use</b>
<p>Scenario 1: Darren provokes a fist fight with his younger brother by destroying a wooden tower that his brother has built. A Time-out rule has previously been established with the boys for violent behaviour.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Tell Darren firmly that he has to go to Time Out corner for 5 minutes. If he protests, say firmly without yelling, “Go now or your Time Out will be increase to 6 minutes.” Once he has completed his Time Out, let him leave the corner and explain why he had to go to Time Out corner when he had calmed down.</li> <li>2. Create an opportunity later in the week for both brothers to play cooperatively. E.g. Building a tower together. Be there to praise them for not fighting.</li> </ol>
<p>Scenario 2: Lisa curses and swears loudly at her mother for not letting her watch her favourite TV show.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Don’t get defensive because your ego feels hurt by her outbursts.</li> <li>2. Stay calm, ignore the curses and focus on the fact that Lisa is angry.</li> <li>3. Label her emotion by saying, “You are angry right now. Go to your room. We can talk when you have calmed down.”</li> <li>4. Reconnect with Lisa when she is calm.</li> </ol>

<p>Scenario 3: In Wayne's family, there is an established house rule that nobody spends more than 2 hours on the computer. If anyone breaks the rule, computer privilege time will be deducted by the amount of time exceeded. The rule was discussed after negotiating with Wayne.</p> <p>One day, Wayne gets carried away while playing an online game and exceeds his time limit by 30 minutes.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. State matter-of- fact that Wayne broke the rule and the computer must be turned off immediately.</li> <li>2. If he doesn't comply after 5 minutes, warn him that you will turn it off when you have counted up to 5.</li> <li>3. If he complies, praise him for that. But explain that because he broke the house rule, he loses 30 minutes of computer time.</li> <li>4. If you had to forcibly shut down the computer, and he cries, bangs the desk, or yells, tell him to go to Time Out corner firmly. There is no need for long lectures as you are imposing the consequence that has been agreed upon.</li> <li>5. Reconnect with Wayne when he has calmed down e.g. Take a walk with him. Acknowledge that you know that the game meant a lot to him, say "<i>I'm proud that you are good at the game but the rule is 2 hours max and I do have to deduct 30 minutes the next time you log in because you broke the rule.</i>"</li> </ol>
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